

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1, 3, and 4 and add new claims 29-31 as indicated below.

The following is a complete listing of the claims, which replaces all previous versions and listings of the claims.

1. (Currently amended) A method of soft-baking a semiconductor wafer ~~substrate~~, comprising the acts of:
 - (a) soft-baking a semiconductor wafer comprising a substrate having a plurality of features formed thereon ~~coated with a resist~~ at a first temperature for a first predetermined period of time, wherein the plurality of features is coated with a resist such that at least one unfilled void is present under the resist and between two of the plurality of features;
and
 - (b) after act (a), soft-baking the semiconductor wafer ~~substrate coated with the resist~~ at a second higher temperature for a second predetermined period of time.
2. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein no resist craters are formed.
3. (Currently amended) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein during the first predetermined period of time:

the resist hardens; and

~~the air trapped in the at least one unfilled void under the resist does not possess sufficient energy to expand through the resist.~~

4. (Currently amended) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein during the first predetermined period of time:

the resist remains fluid;

~~air trapped in the at least one unfilled void under the resist expands through the resist to the surface; and~~

the resist flows back to its original conformal shape.

5. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the semiconductor wafer is subjected to a temperature in the range of 30-90 °C during the first predetermined period of time.

6. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first predetermined period of time is less than 90 seconds.

7. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the first predetermined period of time is more than 90 seconds.

8. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the higher temperature is in the range of 90-150 °C.

9. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the higher temperature is in the range of 100-130 °C.

10. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second predetermined period of time is less than 90 seconds.

11. (Original) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second predetermined period of time is more than 90 seconds.

12.-28. (Canceled)

29. (New) The method, as set forth in claim 1, wherein subsequent to acts (a) and (b), the at least one unfilled void remains present under the resist.

30. (New) A method of soft-baking a semiconductor wafer, comprising the acts of:

(a) soft-baking a substrate having a plurality of features coated with a resist at a first temperature for a first predetermined period of time using a first thermal unit; and

(b) after act (a), soft-baking the substrate at a second higher temperature for a second predetermined period of time using a second thermal unit.

31. (New) The method, as set forth in claim 30, wherein:
prior to acts (a) and (b), at least one unfilled void is present under the resist and between two of the plurality of features; and
subsequent to acts (a) and (b), the at least one unfilled void remains present under the resist.